



April 13, 2018

Marlene H. Dortch  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20054

Re: *Ex Parte* disclosure pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 1.1206(b) in WC Docket Nos. 17-287, 11-42, and 09-197

Dear Ms. Dortch:

Carmen Scurato, Gloria Tristani, and I of the National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC) had two meetings to discuss Lifeline proposals detailed in WC Docket Nos. 17-287, 11-42, and 09-197, Fourth Report and Order, Order on Reconsideration, Memorandum Opinion and Order, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and Notice of Inquiry. On April 11, 2018, we met with Commissioner Michael O’Rielly and his Wireline Advisor, Amy Bender. On April 12, 2018, we met with Commissioner Brendan Carr and his Chief of Staff, Jamie Susskind.

In both meetings, Ms. Tristani explained that, since its inception, Lifeline was always intended to help the poor to get and stay connected to vital telecommunications networks, not to generate broadband investment. NHMC agrees that the Commission should explore ways to improve the program. However, as Ms. Tristani explained, several of the current proposals would unnecessarily harm people in need across the country. For example, eliminating the non-facilities based providers from the program would disconnect over 70 percent of current Lifeline population from their current providers.

Ms. Scurato added that the proposals would have a devastating impact on hurricane victims in Texas,<sup>1</sup> Florida,<sup>2</sup> and especially Puerto Rico<sup>3</sup> who are still struggling to rebuild after Hurricanes Irma and Maria. The overwhelming majority of commenters in the docket, including public interest groups, state regulatory commissions, conservative think tanks, and service providers, agree that the Commission's lead proposals would reduce competition, create uncertainty in the program, and disconnect a large

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<sup>1</sup> National Consumer Law Center, A Lifeline That Breaks Down Barriers to Affordable Communication, <https://www.nclc.org/images/pdf/take-action/lifeline/fact-sheets/TX-LL.pdf> (last visited Apr. 5, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> National Consumer Law Center, A Lifeline That Breaks Down Barriers to Affordable Communication, <https://www.nclc.org/images/pdf/take-action/lifeline/fact-sheets/FL-LL.pdf> (last visited Apr. 5, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> National Consumer Law Center, A Lifeline That Breaks Down Barriers to Affordable Communication, <https://www.nclc.org/images/pdf/take-action/lifeline/fact-sheets/PR-LL.pdf> (last visited Apr. 5, 2018).

number of low-income consumers. Ms. Scurato expanded on arguments in NHMC's Lifeline comments<sup>4</sup> and reply comments.<sup>5</sup> I highlighted issues raised in a Senate letter to Chairman Ajit Pai.<sup>6</sup> We all discussed how proposals to eliminate the Lifeline Broadband Provider designation process, require a maximum discount level, impose a lifetime benefit limit, and introduce a self-enforcing budget cap would cripple the program.

In the meeting with Commissioner O'Rielly, Ms. Tristani explained why advocates and other stakeholders have a sense of urgency related to these Lifeline items. She relayed stories of people in Puerto Rico who would lose service if the Commission adopted the proposals as outlined. Ms. Scurato added how the Commission expanded the Lifeline program after Hurricane Katrina to help victims of the hurricane stay connected. I stated that the Commission did not provide the requisite analysis to show how drastic proposals, such as eliminating non-facilities based providers, would improve the program.

Ms. Scurato explained why the Commission must commit to implementing changes in the *2016 Lifeline Modernization Order*, such as the National Verifier. She discussed how the National Verifier will improve the program as well as address some concerns raised in the current Lifeline proceeding. I also suggested that the Commission identify program efficiencies and meet with people who have Lifeline success stories in order to find additional opportunities to improve.

I respectfully submit this notice of ex parte meeting pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 1.1206(b).

Respectfully submitted,



Francella Ochillo  
Director, Government & Legal Affairs

cc: Commissioner Michael O'Rielly  
Commissioner Brendan Carr  
Amy Bender  
Jamie Susskind

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<sup>4</sup> See National Hispanic Media Coalition, Comments, WC Docket No. 17-287 (Feb. 21, 2018), <http://www.nhmc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/NHMC-Lifeline-Comments-WC-Docket-17-287-02.21.2018.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> See National Hispanic Media Coalition, Reply Comments, WC Docket Nos. 17-287, 11-42, 09-197 (Mar. 23, 2018), <http://www.nhmc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NHMC-Lifeline-Reply-Comments-03.23.2018.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> See Letter sent from Senators Jeffrey Merkley, Kamala Harris, Benard Sanders, Kirsten Gillibrand, Edward Markey, Ron Wyden, Richards Blumenthal, Elizabeth Warren, Richard Durbin, Cory Booker to Chairman Ajit Pai (March 29, 2018), <https://www.merkley.senate.gov/news/press-releases/merkley-senators-push-back-on-fcc-proposal-to-cut-phone-and-broadband-service-from-struggling-americans>.